

Little Greenbrier School and Church House  
Elkmont, Tennessee  
C.S.M.N.P.

HABS No. Tenn 116

HABS  
TENN

78-ELK.V

1-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District No. Tenn

Historic American Buildings Survey  
J. Frazier Smith, District Officer.  
Goodwyn Institute Building.  
Memphis, Tennessee.

ADDENDUM

FOLLOWS...

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LITTLE GREENBRIER SCHOOL AND CHURCH HOUSE  
near Elkmont, Tennessee  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Owner: United States Government, National Park Service

Date of Erection: 1882

Architect:

Builder: The mountain folk of Little Greenbrier Cove,  
Sevier County, Tennessee

Present Condition: Good

Number of Stories: One

Materials of Construction: Logs with fitted wood chink,  
shingle roof.

Other Existing Records:

Additional Data: See following pages.

LITTLE GREENBRIER SCHOOL AND CHURCH HOUSE  
NEAR  
ELKMONT, TENNESSEE  
GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

In the year 1881 the mountain folk living in the area known as Little Greenbrier Cove, Sevier County, Tennessee, petitioned the County to establish a school in their community. The County agreed to provide the teacher if the people of the community provided a suitable building.

Work was started on the building which was to serve as both church house and school house January 1, 1882.

The land was donated by Alfred Lines who originally entered the land on which the building stands. The poplar logs for the walls and other necessary building materials were given by Ephraim Ogle whose land was close by.

The best "corner men" in the community were selected to construct the building. A "corner man" is responsible for the notching and fitting of all logs on his corner. To carry up a corner requires great skill and it is considered a mark of distinction to be selected for these important posts. A list of the corner men and their helpers who built the Little Greenbrier School and Church House follows:

Corner Men

Helpers

John W. Walker  
  
Ephraim Ogle  
Gilbert Abbott  
Henry Claybough

James Thomas Walker  
(son of John W. Walker, 17 years old)  
Bill Stinnet  
Unknown  
Bill Watson

Oxen were hired from William Walker to haul the logs to the site of the building. The logs were so large that only one log could be hauled at a time. One end of the log was placed on the rear of a strong

wagon and the other end of the log allowed to drag on the ground. Two yokes of oxen were required to haul the logs. William Walker was hired to do the hauling. To pay him for the use of his oxen, John Thomas Walker says, "We went and worked back for him then".

Billie Ogle, father of Ephraim Ogle was an old man but wanted to do his part, so he cut and bolted the logs to make the boards (shingles) to cover the roof. The bolts were rived (split with a maul and frow) by Billie Abbott.

The logs used in the building were so large they were split in two, making two wall logs. The halves were used in opposite walls, the split log after it was hewed forming the inside face of the wall.

To split the logs they were first "lined" to insure starting the split straight. To line the logs a string was dipped in a mixture of powdered charcoal and water, the line was then stretched from end to end of the log where the split was to be made and the line snapped leaving a "black line" on the log. The log was then "cracked" on the line with a pole ax to start the split straight and to keep splinters from "running off" where the split occurred. Wedges were placed along this crack and driven in until the log split open.

The logs were placed in a key block to hold them steady while being hewed. First they were "scored" (the excess wood cut away with a double bitted ax while the cutter stood on top of the log) and then dressed with a broad ax halfway down each face. The log was then turned over in the key block and the other half of the log was hewn. Hewing the logs in this manner kept the thickness of the log uniform and prevented the hewer from "running under" causing one edge of the log to be thinner than the other. Most of the logs were also "edge-hewn" to make them uniform in width their entire length.

The chinks between the logs were filled with pieces of wood fitted in the chink and driven tight. Where these pieces of wood projected beyond the inside face of the wall they were dressed off flush with the wall. Many of these pieces which fitted the chinks

originally have become dislodged during the years, only a few of them remain in place.

The first benches were made of poplar slabs with four legs and no backs. They were set in two rows against the walls. The second set of benches were made of sawn and dressed lumber and had backs but no desks. The benches in the school today are the third set to be used in this building.

About 1910 the window openings in the east and west walls were enlarged and fitted with the present frames and sash. At the same time the original blackboard which was about three feet square was replaced by the present blackboard consisting of three boards painted. The window in the south wall which supplied light for the teacher and preacher was covered by the new blackboard and this opening was closed with a section of log which was removed from the building when the other windows were enlarged.

The above data was secured from James Thomas Walker, one of the two men living who helped erect the building.

When the school house was built the County kept its part of the agreement and supplied the teacher. The teacher was paid by a poll tax of one dollar and twenty five cents which was levied on each pupil attending school. The length of the school term was determined by the amount of poll tax collected, the term lasting as long as there was money to pay the teacher. Terms during the first years were seldom longer than two months. The terms gradually lengthened until they extended over nine months.

During the school term preachers would frequently hold meetings during the noon hour. To these meetings would come the older people of the community.

The school property was purchased from the Sevier County Board of Education, August 26, 1933, by the Tennessee Park Commission while acquiring lands to form the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

School continued to be held in this building until the end of the 1935-1936 school term. By the fall of 1936 nearly all families were moved from this area and the school was discontinued.

This building served as the church of the community as well as its school. Services were held in

it each Sunday until 1918 when the new church was built nearby.

To the north of the school house is a small graveyard. Many of the graves have no markers, others are marked with wood and native stone slabs, and some of these are without identification; others have simple inscriptions.

The five Walker sisters who live near the school, and whose father and brother helped erect the building, supplied most of the above information. All of these women attended church and school in the Little Greenbrier School and Church House.

The size of the logs and workmanship displayed in its construction mark this building as one of the finest log structures in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

*Charles S. Grossman*

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and Church House  
Little Greenbrier Cove  
Wears Valley Vicinity  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Sevier County  
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Addendum to:

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and Ghurch House  
Elkmont (Wears Valley Vicinity)  
Sevier County  
Tennessee

PHOTOGRAPHS

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C.